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OBSERVATIONS
ON
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY
AND
SOCINIAN ERROR;

Occasioned by the
CHANGE OF SENTIMENT
IN THE
Religious Creed
OF
THE REV. JOSEPH N—T—N—G—LE.

BY THOMAS WOOD.

“If the Foundations be destroyed, what can the Righteous do?” *Psal. xi. 3.*

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PREFACE.

TO defend the out-works of Christianity against the violent attacks of deistical assailants, is a service to which Ministers of the Gospel, in their official character, have frequently been called, and in which they have completely succeeded. It is singular, and must be peculiarly gratifying to a pious and liberal mind to reflect, that the bold and vigorous opposition recently made by *French Philosophers*, united as a phalanx, to sink the credit of the Religion of JESUS CHRIST, is succeeded by an Institution, enlightened in its views, benevolent in its wishes, comprehensive in its range, and effectual in its operation—in which are concentrated, capacious intellect, profound learning, active piety, and burning zeal—supported by Royal munificence, patriotic statesmen, noblemen, gentlemen, and men of commerce—serving as a magnificent Temple, at whose sacred altar the Sectarian meets the Episcopalian, and, under whose sacred canopy, narrow bigotry yields to the benign influence of genuine philanthropy—and whose sole professed

object is, to send the **BIBLE** of **GOD** to the whole population of the **Globe**, as a luminous torch to dispel mental darkness, and conduct mankind to the Sanctuary of Truth.

At present, enemies, not deistical, engage the attention of Gospel Ministers, even in the citadel itself, who are sacrilegiously attempting to undermine its foundation and demolish its peculiar excellencies: towards the erection of which sacred edifice, renowned Patriarchs, and holy Prophets, contributed their proportion of materials, and which was finished by the combined and arduous labours of Evangelists and Apostles. The foundation on which it stands has never yet been shaken, though every mode of assault has been devised, and every instrument of destruction employed, to effect that purpose. The beautiful structure has occasionally received injury, by the rude attacks of enemies: and in our day, persons are making considerable efforts to disfigure that lovely form, which has been the admiration of past ages.

The following pages are an attempt to guard the vitals of Christianity, against the machinations of the proud, boasting *Sons of Reason*; who exalt themselves above others, and even dare to bring the Divine Oracles to the ordeal of their critical test, and subject them to their imperious decision.

OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

AS a religious character, Mr. N. has given the public a narrative of his "conversion," which is "an interesting and very natural statement." His parents were members of the established church, and his father especially was very sedulous in instructing him in the principles and precepts of Christianity. Thus was he favoured with the early culture of religion; not like many young persons, left to the darkness of ignorance, and the impetuosity of undisciplined passions.

About a year after the death of his father, Mr. N. was bound apprentice to a Socinian, and during his apprenticeship attended the Unitarian chapel (at Chowbent, Lancashire) of which the Rev. Henry Toulmin was then minister: This imprudent step introduced him among persons whose religious tenets proved highly injurious to him, as we learn from his own confession. "Here (says he) was laid the foundation of those errors in which I was afterwards involved; here I was taught to set my own reason above every other aid which

God has afforded to man; here I was soon initiated into the false dogma of Socinianism; here my young mind were at once led into gross errors; in short, here was sown the seeds of infidelity in my heart, which I cultivated pretty much by the reading of Priestley, Hopton Heyneas, and others, upon the subject of Unitarianism. In these books the reasonings appeared so plausible, that I really thought it a species of the grossest blasphemy to assert the existence of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. Accordingly, these sublime truths I treated with the utmost indignity; I ridiculed them in every place where I had an opportunity; they afforded me subject matter of entertainment upon all occasions: I read the creed of St. Athanasius in the same manner I read Tooke's Pantheon, for I regarded them both as alike erroneous. In this manner I went on a considerable time, attacking Trinitarians of every sect that came in my way. But what gave the finishing to all this, and hurried me nearer and nearer the gulph of infidelity, was reading Dr. Priestley's *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*; these books settled the whole affair, and at once gave my soul to the dust along with my body. Materialism engaged my whole attention, and, I may say, my affections too, for about six years."

While thus receding from the truths in which his father had instructed him, and indulging in the practice of wickedness, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* attracted his notice; and being tired of Christianity, he now gave up the truth of the Scriptures, believing that they had nothing in them

of divine inspiration.* He immediately laid aside his books on Socinianism, and adopted the writings of infidels. "And now (says he) I attacked the Socinians with as much warmth as I had done the Trinitarians before." He was so confirmed a Deist, that Dr. Priestley's Answer to Paine "was not in the least satisfactory" to him; and his immorality increased with the licentiousness of his opinions. Having, in a state of intoxication been "led into other crimes too shocking to mention," which his neighbours not only knew, but magnified, he was rendered so wretched with remorse and shame, that he formed the dreadful resolution of committing suicide, and made preparations accordingly: he was prevented from "such an unnatural act," partly by the consideration that "he should considerably hurt the cause of Deism."

Wishing to leave the scene of his evil actions, and get beyond the reach of pointed obloquy, Mr.

* The gradation from Socinianism to deism is very slight; and especially that species of Socinianism which has been patronized by Dr. Priestley, who in order to support it has thought proper to abandon the inspiration of the Scriptures; and has made no scruple to call the apostle Paul an inconclusive reasoner. (Corruptions of Christianity, vol. 2, p. 370.) On such a footing Socinianism may possibly maintain its ground. But on such a footing Deism may maintain its ground much better: and it is rather wonderful that those who have given up so much, should retain any thing. For what is there in Christianity, when all its distinguishing doctrines are taken away, that could render it a subject worthy of a particular revelation?

The Rev. Edward Parson's "Spirit of Modern Socinianism Exemplified."

N. removed to Manchester, accompanied with the horrors of a guilty conscience. When there, he says, "One night as I wandered in the streets like a sheep having no shepherd, I heard the sound of devotional music: turning round to see from whence the heavenly harmony proceeded, I found it came from the Methodist Chapel in Oldham Street. I stopped, and listened, and for a time stood speechless on the spot. At length my overburdened heart could not longer bear its weight, and I burst into tears. O, I exclaimed, how happy are these poor misguided enthusiasts to what I am; even the very falsehoods their minister endeavours to persuade them to believe, afford them more solid satisfaction than all the truths of a natural religion put together afford me. I'll go in and hear them. I went into the chapel, when Mr. Mather had taken his text and was enlarging on the benefits of religion, and the insufficiency of all earthly pleasures to give peace to a wounded soul. The sermon affected me, and I felt I had a soul, whether I would acknowledge it or not: but to describe its anguish, I want words: and I verily believe I should have roared aloud from its disquietude, had it not been for shame."

Mr. N. soon left Manchester, and returned home, where he pursued the same infidel and wicked course of life as before; nay, by reading the Second Part of the Age of Reason, together with another infidel book, he became more confirmed in Deism. The Rev. Thomas Taylor's Answer to Paine's Age of Reason was now recom-

mended to his attentive perusal; but the reasoning of this pamphlet to him seemed so inconclusive, and so far failed of convincing him of his error, that he formed a determination to write an answer to it. The Lord's Day was the chief leisure he had for study; on the evening of which he read to his deistical associates what he had written during the day, and of which they expressed high satisfaction. A conversation upon the Love of God to man, and of the comfortable influences of the Holy Spirit, led to a suspension of this work in favour of Deism, and ultimately to the destruction of the manuscript by committing it to the flames.

About this time, he says, "I was *forced* to pray, which I did with all my might, earnestly imploring the Father of mercies that he would instruct me in the right way: that if I was not, I begged he would convince me of it. And now, for the first time, I believed that the Lord was a God hearing and answering prayer, and was firmly persuaded that the time was fast approaching when I should no longer be in a state of uncertainty about religion. I acquainted some of my companions, that I now knew a method to prove either the truth or fallacy of Deism, which was, to make use of the means laid down in the Scripture, namely "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God: Ask, and it shall be given:" And that he has promised to give *liberally* to all, and *upbraid* none. If the Scriptures do not answer the promised end, I shall then know of a truth that they are what I have conceived them to be; if they prove as good

as their word, I shall then not only reap the fruits of a firm belief in the Gospel, but also have it in my power to convince them of it. For they had told me prior to this, that if I found it so, they would believe *me*.—My prayers were attended with consolation, and I took more pleasure in them, than in any thing I had ever done in my life; which encouraged me to proceed in spite of all opposition: until at length it pleased the Lord, in some measure, to open my blind eyes to see my error, which from the comfort I derived, convinced me of the truth of the Gospel. O, Sir! (addressing the Rev. Benjamin Rhodes,) prayer, mighty prayer, cannot be too much recommended; if it does not produce “a change in the Creator,” I am certain it will produce one in the creature.”*

He next had recourse to the Scriptures, which he searched impartially, not as he had done before, but for eternal life. He was led to see the necessity and propriety of church fellowship: he says, “I knew that I must attach myself to those Christians whose life, doctrines, and conversation, were most agreeable to the holy Scriptures. I therefore entered the Methodist Society, and met in class. Yet still I was in a dark state of nature;—I had not my robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb;—I was not born again, and could lay no

* Deists have ridiculed the duty of prayer, as an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind. Such a profane intimation, when yielded to, not only prevents a person obtaining heavenly blessings, but causes a cessation of all intercourse between God and him.

claim to a place in the kingdom of heaven. I saw my brethren at our (class) meeting, filled with the love of God, and triumphing in their Saviour. But as for myself, I was dead in trespasses and sins,

“A stranger to that blood which bought

“My pardon on the tree.”

In this state I continued several weeks, until one day as I sat by the bed-side of a sick man with whom I lived, he turned his dying eyes toward me, and looking very earnestly at me for some time, I thought he saw something in me which I could not discern myself; when suddenly the arrows of conviction stuck fast in my soul, and I saw myself in the gall of bitterness, and under the dreadful curse of a just law. Of all the pains I had ever felt, these were the most acute. O, the excruciating tortures of my condemned soul! There appeared but one step betwixt me and eternal destruction; all my past transgressions now stared me in the face, and I immediately retired into another room, where I wept aloud, and as well as I could, I prayed; but my adamant heart seemed harder than ever, although a little softened by the tears I had shed. I wandered up and down the house seeking rest but could find none. Upon opening the Bible I cast my eyes upon the following words, which afforded me great encouragement, “Ye know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.” I then went to a class-meeting, firmly believing that the Lord would meet me there. When the Leader had done speaking to the people, he desired I

would tell them what the Lord had done for my soul. I told them as well I could, how I had gone on that day: we then went to prayer, and in a few minutes the Lord, in tender mercy, set my burdened, guilty soul, at perfect liberty; I was brought out of darkness and raised up into marvellous light—out of bondage into blessed liberty: my soul was filled with redeeming love, and with peace, that passeth all understanding. This was on the 18th of June, 1796. Dear Sir, you will excuse me describing the transports of my soul at this instant; words cannot do this, nor could all the powers of eloquence ever give the least idea of it. If you can tell the joys of heaven at the conversion of a sinner; if you know what it is to taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; then, Sir, you may form an idea of the happiness I then felt.”

Thus far we perceive, that Mr. N. had left the dark shades of Deism, relinquished the cold and gross system of materialism, embraced the sacred Scriptures as inspired of God, renounced sin from a conviction of its evil nature and destructive tendency, united himself to those Christians whom he viewed as the people of God; and he professed to have obtained by prayer to God, and faith in Christ as having died for him, the pardon of all his sins; and, as a consequence, to enjoy inexpressible consolations from the Holy Spirit.

My acquaintance with Mr. N. commenced soon after his conversion. He has given to the public an account of our first interview, which was

preceded on my part by a singular dream.* At this period, or at any future interview I had with him, I did not perceive in his spirit, conversation, and deportment, any thing that I could not reconcile to the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. He was, I believe, a sincere Christian, in faith, in experience, and in practice. He joined heartily in the means of grace, and was in devotional exercises fervent and devout. No suspicion that his conversion was not real, as far as I know, existed in any person; but on the contrary, a joyful assurance was entertained, that he was *a brand plucked out of the fire*.

On receiving an invitation to become a student at a Socinian Academy, he asked my advice, which, according to the best of my judgement, I gave him. His taste for literary improvement was considerable, and which, in addition to the entreaties of some of his connections, became a temptation to accept the offer. At length, he complied; but after continuing there for some time, he came to the resolution to leave it, and did actually refuse pressing solicitations to exercise the ministry among the Socinians. About the time of leaving the Academy, I had a conversation with him in Manchester, when he gave me fully to understand that, though he had been on dangerous ground, yet he still retained not only his faith in the essential doctrines of the Gospel, but the spirit of devotedness to God.

* See Portraiture of Methodism, pages 276—278.

Some time after leaving the Academy, he removed to Macclesfield, at which place, that he might procure a maintenance, he turned his attention to the book-trade. That his religious views at this time were not changed, but he retained evangelical opinions, and lived under their salutary influence, will appear from the following letter which I received from him.

“ Macclesfield, Nov. 8th, 1799.

DEAR SIR,

You will excuse this freedom, as you knew my situation when you were at Manchester; I left the Academy, and must seek some other situation. Since then, I have been most of my time with Mr. S. as corrector of the press, &c. I am now about to re-publish Barclay's Dictionary, with Additions, &c. from other Authors. I intend to print it in about twenty Numbers, quarto. I have already employed some persons to collect subscriptions in different towns, and should be glad to make trial in Y——. Prompted therefore by your former kindness, I have taken the liberty to ask your advice about employing a man about W——, and the other adjacent towns: I beg your advice concerning this. I do not know what sort of a place W—— is, nor whether there is any thing of the sort in that country. A line from you, when you can steal a moment's time from the more important avocations of your station, with some description of the country around, would be esteem-

ed a great kindness. I write from Macclesfield, where I intend for the future to make the place of my residence.

With regard to my best concerns, I can say to the glory of divine grace "it is well with me." Since I gave up all thoughts of the Academy, God has indeed been both good and gracious to me. Blessed be his name for ever! It is true, I have forfeited the poisonous smiles of what the world would call my friends; but what could I do? I could not endure the idea of spending my precious Sabbaths in riding four, five, six, or eight miles, to ramble over Extracts from Seneca, Epictetus, or even Socrates himself, and call it preaching the Gospel, for a guinea a Sunday. Good God, save me from a Socinian Gospel! The fire of Mount Sinai would scorch my soul to death, nor would Moses' stepping in betwixt prevent that hurting me, which even made him "exceedingly fear and quake." No, rather let me suffer affliction with the simple worshippers of a *crucified* and *despised* JESUS, and enjoy the approbation of my God, than all the pompous flattery of all the minute philosophers of this Age of Reason!

I have committed my soul into the hands of my God, and what need I fear? He is *now* the strength of my heart, and he *will* be my portion for ever. He has done much for me. O, how often do I tremble, yet trembling rejoice, when I reflect on the state in which God found a worm, nay, a self-exalted rebel, about four years ago. "O, to grace how great a debtor!"

You will excuse so much freedom, but as I have ever considered you as concerned for my welfare, and as I must write to some one, I thought you would not take it amiss that I wrote to you. If you know any honest man whom you think would answer for the afore-mentioned purpose, I wish you would write to me. He shall have good wages, and a permanent situation. If you can get time to write and let me know, I will write more particularly.

I am, &c. &c.

J. N."

After having deliberately considered, and attended to the request of Mr. N. I wrote an answer; and in a few months after received from him the following Letter.

"Macclesfield, July 19th, 1800.

VERY DEAR SIR,

I am happy in having an opportunity of writing to you. I received your kind Letter, and am obliged to you on account of the trouble you put yourself to concerning the Dictionary. I got a number of subscriptions near home, and the work has been at press some time. We are now at Article CORD. But as it required more time than I could spare on other accounts, to attend to the work myself, a young man has the subscriptions, and is now printing it at his own expence. I correct the press for him, and teach

a school in this town, which more than answers my expectations. - God indeed has long been good unto me.

I have a plan amongst the Local Preachers here, and that JESUS *whose blood is the ground of all my happiness*, is better to me than ever. I mean, I am more sensible of his goodness than ever.

I am, with the greatest respect,

Your's sincerely,

J. N."

Those parts of these letters that touch on religion, agree exactly with that profession of doctrine and experimental piety, which Mr. N. made on his conversion; and shew that for several years he continued sound in the faith of Christ, and retaining a comfortable sense of divine things.

That some time after this period, a change took place, not only in respect of situation, but also in the religious sentiments of Mr. N., appears from a letter of his inserted in a periodical work, and of which the following is a copy.

TO THE MONTHLY REVIEWERS.

" *City Road, Nov. 2, 1808.*

GENTLEMEN,

For the impartial and yet favourable notice you have taken of my Portraiture of Methodism in your last number, I desire to express my thankfulness. But I should feel an additional

obligation if, through the medium of your widely circulated publication, I might be permitted to correct an error into which you, Gentlemen, and some others, have been led, relative to my present situation among the Methodists.

I was a Methodist Preacher upwards of nine years. I am no longer either a Methodist Preacher or a member of their society. I voluntarily resigned my *Ticket* a few years ago, in consequence of a change in my religious sentiments; and though often solicited to re-join the Society, I have very seldom been within the walls of a Methodist Meeting since I left the connection.

I ought certainly, before this, to have made an explicit declaration of my removal from the society of Methodists; but as my letters were addressed to a Lady, who knew at the time that I was no Methodist, and not dreaming, when I published the letters, that any one of my readers would mistake me for a Methodist, I did not think it necessary to mention the fact of my change of sentiment in the Portraiture.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient

And obliged humble Servant,

J. N.*

This is a formal and public declaration of a change in his creed, and it may be presumed from the doctrines held and believed by the Methodists,

* Monthly Review, for November, 1808.

which are the same as those contained in the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England, to Socinianism, as he has become a Socinian Preacher. To scrutinize motives, is beyond the object of these pages; but how Mr. N. could, after having had the broad seal of Heaven put to the doctrines of the Trinity, the efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and the regenerating and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit, realized experimentally in his own heart, and exemplified in his conduct, secede to Socinianism, and engage in propagating its sentiments, affords cause both of regret and astonishment. If he had never enjoyed the power of godliness, and his religion been mere speculation, this change would not be so remarkable; but after in answer to prayer, and through faith in the atonement of Christ, he received remission of sins, and an inexpressible sense of the love of God, to embrace a defective and opposite creed, become its advocate from the pulpit, which at a former period he conscientiously and firmly refused to do, is a remarkable instance of conduct.

The writer of a paper inserted in a periodical work, when speaking on this subject, says, "It is not to be imputed to him as a fault that he forsook after having embraced for many years the Wesleyan faith, and sought communion with the Unitarians. If he was chiefly induced so to do by a well-grounded conviction, that their tenets were more agreeable to the Most High, he was right.*" That

* The Scourge, for January, 1813, p. 5.

Mr. N. had once a "well-grounded conviction" that "he was right," is evident from the Scriptures; but that he afterwards "sought communion with the Unitarians," being "chiefly induced so to do by a well-grounded conviction that their tenets were more agreeable to the Most High," is a position that I deny. The Scriptures being the word of God, are the test of truth to men. They are consistent with themselves, and uniform throughout. A well-grounded conviction must be produced by their operation as its cause, and without which such an effect cannot exist. And the divine authority and perfect uniformity of the Scriptures absolutely prevent a conviction being produced by their operation, that does not agree with the doctrines they contain. But Socinianism contradicts the grand and essential doctrines of the Gospel, such as the Trinity, the atonement of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, all of which the Wesleyan Methodists believe and profess; therefore no man, it is presumed, ever "sought communion with the Unitarians," being "chiefly induced so to do by a well-grounded conviction that their tenets were more agreeable to the Most High. A conviction that is not consonant to the Bible is not its product, but must be ascribed to some other cause. A man may unite himself to Unitarians from what he may imagine to be "a well-grounded conviction that their tenets are more agreeable to the Most High;" for it would be passing the bounds of Christian charity even to think, that many of the Unitarians (so called) are not sincere in their religious pro-

fession; but for a person, who has known experimentally that “the kingdom of God,” or inward religion, “is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,*” to do so, is impossible, unless, as the Apostle asserts, he is become “blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.†”

Mr. N. in his letter to me, dated July 19th, 1800, when speaking on the subject of his own personal piety, uses this language—“that JESUS whose *blood* is the *ground* of all my happiness;” and in the letter dated Nov. 8th, 1799, he speaks in high terms of “the simple worshippers of a *crucified* and *despised* JESUS,” intimating that he could in communion with them, “enjoy the approbation of his God.” The *blood* of JESUS was the *ground* or *foundation* of *all* his *happiness*! He had the test of religious feeling, for he was *happy*! This *conviction* of his was *well-grounded*! That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only and sufficient foundation of human happiness, we shall proceed to state and prove, from the infallible testimony of the Sacred Writings; and by which we shall perceive the vast difference that exists, between orthodox Christianity and the baseless fabric of the Socinian or Unitarian Creed.

The Scriptures, in the easiest language, and by allusions with which we are quite familiar, convey the most interesting and important instruction.

* Rom. xiv. 17, 18. † 2 Pet. i. 9.

Our necessities compel us to erect houses for shelter, and other conveniences. Now, in architecture it is absolutely necessary that the foundation be well laid, or otherwise the whole fabric would be in the utmost danger. In every building designed for use and duration, it is necessary that the foundation be strong, and the superstructure similar and proportionate. Apply this to religion, which the Scriptures direct us to do, and we at once perceive the great utility of having a sufficient and permanent foundation, on which to build our piety, and found our hope of happiness for eternity. When the first father of our race threw down the tabernacle which had been built with the most admirable skill and contrivance, God was pleased to lay another foundation, on which to build it anew, and make it stand securely, that it might be a habitation for himself to dwell in. He laid his own eternal Son as the foundation of the sacred structure, who is able to bear its weight for ever. “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.”* St. Peter, quoting this passage according to the Septuagint, applies it expressly to Christ. “To whom coming,” says he, “as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious”.† So it clearly appears that *this stone* which God

* Isai. xxviii. 16.

† 1 Peter ii. 4, 6.

has laid as a foundation of the hope, salvation, and happiness of his Church, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church of God is, in Scripture, frequently compared to a house. “That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.”* And all true believers, all regenerate persons, are “lively stones” in this building, “built up a spiritual house”† upon Christ their foundation. Believing Jews and Gentiles, says St. Paul, “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in which you (Gentiles) also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”‡

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church of God in respect of his *person*. The happiness of man did originally depend on a perfect obedience to the revealed will of God; but by violating the law of his Creator, he forfeited his favour, lost his moral image, and became obnoxious to his just displeasure. And if some plan could not have been devised by infinite wisdom, for vindicating the moral perfections of God, and his righteous government, both of which were dishonoured by man’s transgression—a plan to shew the divine displeasure against sin by punishing it, and to restore the sinner to the favour and happiness he had forfeited, he must have continued guilty and miserable for ever.

* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † 1 Pet. ii. 5. ‡ Eph. ii. 14, 20, 22.

It was therefore necessary that he who was to be the Author of our salvation, should both suffer, and by suffering satisfy incensed justice, and thus repair the honour of the divine law and government. It was both meet and right that the same nature which had sinned should also suffer; and that satisfaction should be made in that nature by which the transgression came. It was also necessary that he should be more than a creature, because a mere creature, though perfectly holy, can never make satisfaction to infinite justice. Therefore when no creature in heaven or in earth, capable of this undertaking, could be found, the Son of God was appointed, and he freely undertook the arduous work of our redemption and salvation—who “being in the form of God,” and “thinking it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet, for the accomplishing of this great design, “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Though he “was in the beginning with God,”* and “all things were made by him,”† yet “it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”‡ He then, being both God and man in one person, was capable of suffering and dying for our sins; and by his death, of satisfying divine justice, and obtaining

* Phi. ii. 6—8.

† John i. 2, 3.

‡ Heb. ii. 17.

eternal redemption and salvation for us. He therefore is every way sufficient to be the foundation of our happiness, both for time and eternity.

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church of God in respect of his *merits*. However excellent and glorious the Son of God might be as to his person, yet if he had not obeyed and suffered for us, we could have derived no benefit from him. But he came into the world on our account, suffered and died in our stead, and by his death merited all that is necessary to our happiness. There are *four* things requisite to the salvation of fallen guilty men; all which we find in the mediatorial character and work of Jesus Christ.

1. *Sin expiated.* Sin is so great an evil, being contrary to all the divine perfections, that without the expiation of it the sinner can never be justified or saved. "Your iniquities," says the Prophet, "have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."* But Jesus died to make atonement for our sins, offering up himself a sacrifice for them. When man by transgression had exposed himself to the curse of the broken law, the Sovereign Lawgiver was pleased to admit of an expiatory sacrifice, instead of the suffering of the sinner. Of this the Jews were informed by their many sacrifices, which were typical representations of the great sacrifice of atonement that was in due time to be offered up. Therefore we read that when atonement was made

* Isai. lix. 2.

by those sacrifices, their sins were forgiven and blotted out. “He shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin-offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.”* “And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.”† Now that which was done typically under the law, was done really and perfectly by Jesus Christ, when he was lifted up and died on the Cross. “Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—and that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”‡ And whereas the legal sacrifices were appointed for the expiation of some sins only, Jesus has, “by one offering, perfected for ever them that are sanctified,”§ and “his blood cleanseth from all sin.”||

2. *Reconciliation made.* By reason of our sins God was an enemy to us, and we were children of wrath. “The wrath of God,” says the Apostle, “is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”¶ So that, by reason of sin, all mankind are obnoxious to the just displeasure of God. And if the eternal Son, as Mediator, had not interposed between us guilty rebels and the offended Majesty of heaven, turned away his

*Lev. iv. 20. †Numb. xv. 28. ‡Rom. iii. 25, 26. §Heb. x. 4.
|| 1 John i. 7. ¶Rom. i. 18.

anger by dying in our stead, and thereby meriting reconciliation for us, we must for ever have endured the infliction of misery. The blood of Jesus has turned away the flaming sword that guarded the gate of Paradise. His blood being sprinkled on the sacred throne, has turned it into a mercy-seat. God is now reconciled, and propitious to all that come to him in the name of his Son, trusting in his merit for salvation. Thus we are reconciled by the death of Christ, and by the blood of the cross. Jesus "having made peace through the blood of his cross, it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself."* "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."† The doctrine which the Apostles were commissioned to publish through all nations was, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."‡

3. *Redemption effected.* By our transgressions we became not only obnoxious to the displeasure of God, but the captives and bond-slaves of satan. We had sold ourselves for nought, and he had taken possession of his bargain. Such was our awful condition, that if our blessed Lord had not given his own life a ransom for us, by dying and rising again broken the head of the serpent, and obtained deliverance for his captives,—we might have remained for ever under his dominion, and by him have been tormented in the place of endless darkness. For the Son of God assumed our

* Colloss. i. 19, 20.

† Röm. v. 10.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.

nature, that “through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and” thereby “deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.”* “In him we” (all believers) “have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”† We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”‡ By his obedience, death, and resurrection, he has obtained a right to open the prison doors of the prince of darkness, and let his captives go free; and a period will come when he will chain him in the bottomless pit, that he may never more afflict or tempt his righteous servants.

4. *Sanctification secured.* By the fall of man we lost not only the possession of perfect happiness, but the excellent beauty of holiness. The image of God, consisting in righteousness and true holiness, in which man was created, was utterly defaced. The recovery of this is so indispensably necessary, that the Apostle asserts, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”§ Happiness also, even in the present life, depends on the acquisition and possession of a renewed nature. But Jesus has procured for us not only a right to happiness, but the means by which to acquire it. He has highly exalted our nature by taking it into personal union with his divine nature, and by his death has merited personal sanctification for us. His inward tempers, and outward actions so far as imitable, exhibit a glorious pattern for us to

* Heb. ii. 14, 15. † Eph. i. 7. ‡ Rom. iii. 24. § Heb. xii. 14.

copy; and by the energy of his Spirit he produces in us a moral resemblance of himself, that "as he is, so are we in this world."* Thus the Apostle speaks. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."† "By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."‡ By virtue of his death he not only obtained gifts for men, but bestows his Spirit on all those who believe in his name, to sanctify and make them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."§

Thus we see what Jesus has purchased for us that he might secure our happiness; and all this he has done meritoriously. In his death there was proper merit: for—his obedience and suffering were complete. He omitted nothing that either God or his law required. He drank the whole of that cup, mixed with the most bitter ingredients, which the Father put into his hand. As he came to do his will, so he did it perfectly; and, as it "became" him, "fulfilled all righteousness."||—His death was not of debt, or what he was compelled to undergo, but entirely free and voluntary. It was more than could have been required at his hand antecedently to those engagements, relating to our salvation, into which he entered with his Father.—He obeyed the law and suffered its penalty in his own strength, and of himself was in

* 1 John iv. 17. † Heb. xiii. 12. ‡ Heb. x. 10. § Coloss i. 12.
|| Matt. iii. 15.

every respect competent to accomplish the great work he undertook. "He laid down his life," and "no man" by irresistible violence "took it from him: he had power to lay it down, and to take it up again."* There was an exact proportion between his unparalleled sufferings, and the invaluable reward they obtained. With his own precious blood he procured salvation for us: for, says St. Peter, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."† Thus Milton introduces God speaking to the Messiah, on the subject of Adam's sin, and his own merit.

"His crimes make guilty all his sons; thy merit
 "Imputed shall absolve them, who renounce
 "Their own both righteous, and unrighteous deeds;
 "And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
 "Receive new life."

Therefore, on these different accounts, his obedience and death were meritorious.

We shall further observe with regard to this foundation, that Christ is a *chosen* stone. As corner stones, on which the weight of the whole building rests, are usually chosen with much care by the chief architect; so Christ is a stone chosen and approved by the Supreme Being. "A living stone disallowed of men, but chosen of God."‡ And we may safely rely on that which infinite wisdom chooses and approves. But Jesus is chosen and approved by God the Father, as having every

* John x. 17, 18. † 1 Peter i. 18, 19. ‡ 1 Peter ii. 4.

requisite qualification to mediate between God and man, satisfy divine justice, and effect eternal redemption for sinners. Was he disallowed by the Jewish rulers? It was because "they would not come to him, that they might have life."* They rejected the meek and lowly Saviour, and looked for a pompous secular deliverer—evidently chusing temporal, in preference to spiritual or heavenly things; and so they stumbled and fell upon him, and were broken. He was to them "a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, because they were disobedient."†

He is a *tried* stone. Christ is a foundation that has long been tried by men; and they who have made trial of him, in all ages, have ever found him to be a sufficient support. Abraham, the father of the faithful, good old Jacob, pious Job, holy David, and many others, had large experience of the Redeemer's care and faithfulness; and found him, in all their trials and sufferings, always near to help them. And he has been the same to those who have trusted in him in all ages. None ever did so, and was confounded; but many have been comforted in life, and left the world bearing their dying testimony to his excellence, goodness, faithfulness to his promises, and that in all their difficulties he had never forsaken them.

He is a *precious* stone. Jesus is possessed of all the excellencies of the human nature, and of all the perfections of the Godhead. A man who

* John v. 40. † 1 Peter ii. 8.

relinquishes all that he has, in order to gain this pearl of great price, makes a wise bargain, and shall be rich to all eternity. Every thing becomes valuable according to the relation it bears to Christ. His blood is most precious. The precepts of the law, and the promises of the Gospel, are exceedingly precious. His saints are the excellent ones on the earth, and precious in his sight. As all excellencies unite in himself, so he is dear to God, to angels, and to men. He was ever dear to his Father, as one brought up with him, and always his delight. Angels pay religious reverence, and perform cheerful obedience to him. And he is the joy of the sons of men, but especially precious to all them that believe.* It is true, there were some in the days of his flesh who saw no form or comeliness in him; but they despised, rejected, and were offended at him: while others perceived him to be fairer than the sons of men, having all grace poured into his lips, and being altogether lovely.

He is a *sure* foundation. Christ is a strong rock, the rock of ages: that rock on which he said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."†

- "Temples may fall, with sects and states,
- "But Truth's imperishable gates
- "Resist each hostile shock!
- "The Church of CHRIST can never fall;
- "Strong stands her heaven-protected wall;
- " 'Tis built upon a rock."

Ever since God published to Adam, in the first

* 1 Pet. ii. 7. † Matt. xvi. 18.

promise,* his purpose of building his Church upon this foundation, the powers of darkness have been very busy in endeavouring to overturn it; but all their rage and malice have proved in vain. The sacred structure yet stands, and shall do so through all the ages of eternity. For this foundation is laid in the wisdom of God, too deep for enemies to undermine, and too strong for them to throw down. He who is the foundation of our hope, is the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age; the government of the Church and of the world rests upon his shoulders, and he will uphold all those in safety who build their salvation upon him. He will defend them against all the rage and hostile attacks of those who try to injure them, support their faith and hope in the hour of dissolution,† and bear them triumphant to the heavenly world.

God, who laid the foundation of the earth, and reared the pillars of heaven, made also provision for the establishment and security of his Church. As he knew what sort of foundation was necessary for so important a structure, and as none would be sufficient but his eternal Son; so in the following particulars we shall perceive how he *laid* him:—

* Gen. iii. 15.

† A Physician having attended a sick man, and tried various expedients without success, at length told him his perilous situation, and urged him to prepare for a better world. The Patient replied, “he had a good hope.” The Physician asked, “But what is the *ground* of your hope?” He answered, “*Oaths, and promises, and blood!*”

1. In his *gracious purpose*. With God all times are actually present. He sees all future things, as well as those that now exist. Before he created Adam, he foresaw that he would abuse his liberty; and also the baneful consequences which this must naturally have on all his posterity. For “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,”* or rather, as the original words properly signify, “from all eternity.”—Though possessed of Almighty power, he did not prevent it. He answers for himself in Milton—

“Man will fall,

“He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault?

“Whose but his own? Ingrate! he had of me

“All he could have: I made him just and right,

“Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

“..... If I fore-knew,

“Fore-knowledge had no influence on their fault,

“Which had no less prov’d certain, unfore-known.”

He saw that man would very soon forfeit his favour, lose his moral image, and become miserable. He could, no doubt, have prevented this; but he allowed it to take place, that he might bring greater good out of it. He purposed to save fallen man by his free grace; and that, if “sin abounded,” by the first transgression over all the earth; yet “grace would much more abound,”† in the gift of his Son, and the benefits derived from him to all believers. He determined to lay, as the foundation of human happiness, his own Son, who is a strong and immoveable rock. And who can frustrate this plan?

* Acts xv. 18. † Rom. v. 20.

Who shall make void his counsel? “The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”* Sooner shall the universe cease to exist, than any thing that he has resolved to accomplish can fail of its completion. For who has resisted his will? or who has an arm stronger than he?

2. In the *council of redemption*. Man having by transgression destroyed the noble fabric of holiness and happiness in which he was created; God resolved to re-build this ruined edifice, to lay the foundation again both deep and strong, not upon the doctrine of works, but the efficacy of grace, and for this purpose entered into council with his beloved Son. Thus the Prophet speaks, “The counsel of peace shall be between them both:”† i. e. the council between the Father, his own Son, and doubtlessly the Holy Ghost, by which our peace and reconciliation were obtained. An excellent Poet sings,

“ Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

“ In council join again,

“ To restore thine image, lost

“ By frail, apostate-man.

“ O might I thy form express,

“ Through faith begotten from above,

“ Stamp’d with real holiness,

“ And fill’d with perfect love !”

In addition to which, Milton introduces God the Father speaking thus to the Messiah—

* Psal. xxxiii. 11. † Zech. vi. 13.

“ Man shall not quite be lost, but sav’d who will,
 “ Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
 “ Freely vouchsaf’d : once more I will renew
 “ His lapsed pow’rs ;—yet once more he shall stand
 “ On even ground against his mortal foe,
 “ By me upheld.—Be thou in Adam’s room
 “ The head of all mankind, though Adam’s son,
 “ As in him perish all men, so in thee,
 “ As from a second root, shall be restor’d
 “ As many as are restor’d, without thee none.”

In this council of redemption, the Son engaged to make reparation for the dishonour done by man’s disobedience, and “ to make his soul an offering for sin.” In consequence of this, the Father promised to “ divide him a portion with the great;” and “ that he should see the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied:”* i. e. that he would accept and completely save all who should believe in him, and obey his injunctions.

3. In *sending* his Son into the *world*. God not only purposed our salvation, entered into council with his Son for the accomplishing of it, but “ when the fulness of the time was come, sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”† This was foretold by the inspired Prophets. “ Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bare a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”‡ “ The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass

* Isai. liii. 10, 12.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

‡ Isai. vii. 14.

a man.”* This woman was the Virgin Mary. The angel Gabriel said to her, “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.” On objecting, that in her present circumstances this was naturally impossible, the Angel said to her, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”† The Son of God assumed in the Virgin’s womb an entire and proper human nature, consisting of a true body and a reasonable soul.

Though Christ was conceived and born of a woman in a peculiar way, and different from all others, yet he was a perfect man. “The Word was made flesh.”‡ “God was manifest in the flesh.”§ The Scripture speaks expressly of his soul, and of its affections and passions—“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”|| With respect to both these essential parts of his constitution as man, he is said to have “increased in wisdom and stature”—in “wisdom,” in relation to his soul, and in “stature,” with respect to his body.¶ The Son of God assumed an entire human nature, into a personal union with his pre-existent divine nature. The human nature has its subsistence in the person of the Son of God. The divine and human natures are united, so that the same person is the man

*Jer. xxxi. 22. † Luke i. 31, 35. ‡ John i. 14. §1 Tim. iii. 16.

|| Matt. xxvi. 38. ¶ Luke ii. 52.

Christ Jesus, and God blessed for ever. These natures in Christ's single person continue distinct, without transmutation or confusion, and will do so for ever: the Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God; either of which is simply impossible.—Though the human nature in Christ, and in us, is the same as to substance or essence, yet, between his human nature and ours, there is a considerable disparity. The human nature is solely and singly in us; in Christ it is in union with the divine nature. We have it in the ordinary way of generation; he had it in a miraculous and peculiar way. In us it is defiled; in him it is perfectly pure and holy. In us it has its proper subsistence; in him it subsists without any personality of its own; and therefore, though he has two natures, he has but one person.—The great end or design of this assumption of human nature, was to qualify him for the work of our redemption, for giving a proper and full satisfaction to the justice of God, and to secure the honour of his truth and holiness, while he displayed the riches of his grace to fallen men. In order to his redeeming us, he must die; for death was what the law threatened in case of disobedience. Now, as God, he could not die, therefore he assumed the human nature, the nature that sinned, that he might be capable of dying, and giving the satisfaction required.—Thus, as in eternity God purposed to send his Son, so in time he has effected it: as before all time he had laid the foundation of our happiness, so in time he has done this actually. His Son came into the

world, and has established the Gospel dispensation. For Jesus, by his obedience and sufferings, “being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*

4. In the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the *dead*. Man, by transgression, has forfeited his life; his body is become mortal, and, by the decree of God, doomed to return to the dust. Jesus Christ, considered as our surety, had not only to suffer the penalty of death for us, but also to deliver us from its power. His resurrection from the dead, was the subject of prophecy. “Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”† Christ is frequently called “the Holy One of God;” and St. Peter applies the words of the Psalmist, to Christ.‡ We have also this remarkable event represented in types. For instance: Isaac was a type of Christ, both in his death and resurrection. Hence, says the Apostle, “Abraham received him from the dead in a figure.”§ In Abraham’s intention Isaac was sacrificed, but being at the command of God spared, he received him from the dead in a figure. All this was done to prefigure that Christ the Son of God was to be actually sacrificed, and after death was really to be raised to life again.—This important matter of fact is attested by a great number of witnesses, who saw Christ alive after his resurrection. The twelve Apostles were the principal evidence; a number sufficient to ascertain the fact, if no more were to be produced. But he was seen of above

* Heb. v. 9. † Psal. xvi. 10. ‡ Acts ii. 27. § Heb. xi. 19.

five hundred brethren at once; and many persons were eye witnesses to his ascension.—By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, his Deity was vindicated: “he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness.”* When he was on the cross, the Jews insulted him, saying, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”† They thought his crucifixion and death sufficiently confuted his pretensions to Deity. But all the vile aspersions of his enemies were removed by his resurrection. For God would not have raised him from the dead, until the end of time, and then among the wicked, if he had been a false pretender to Deity, or a false Messenger or Prophet. By his resurrection, therefore, we are assured that he is the Son of God, and the true Messiah.—The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is for the confirmation of our faith and hope in God. “God raised him from the dead,” says St. Peter, “and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.”‡ His resurrection gives us assurance, that what he did and suffered in our room and stead was accepted of God; that he was reconciled, justice satisfied, and peace procured. Hereby we are assured that pardon, holiness, and eternal life, are obtained for all true believers. Their debt is evidently paid, by the discharge of their surety from the prison of

* Rom. i. 4. † Matt. xxvii. 40, 43. ‡ 1 Peter, i. 21.

the grave.—After his resurrection, he entered into his glory, that he might pour forth the Holy Spirit. Before his death, it was said, that “the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”* Christ had frequently encouraged his Disciples to expect the Spirit, as his gift; and on his exaltation, the Spirit was poured from on high, which was a proof of the riches of his purchase, the height of his glory, and the sovereignty of his power. After his death, he was to make intercession for his people. This was typified by the High Priest’s entering once every year into the Holy of Holies, with blood and incense; when he appeared before God in behalf of the people, to make atonement and intercession for them. This is expressly applied to Christ the antitype. “Into the second tabernacle went the High Priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”† Hence the Apostle triumphs, “Blessed be the God and Father

* John vii. 39. † Heb. ix. 7, 11, 12, 24.

of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”*

5. This foundation is laid *doctrinally*, in the Holy Scriptures. Though the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a great variety of subjects, yet they are but one system containing the whole revelation of the will of God, in distinction from all other writings, and, collectively taken, may be called the “word of Christ.”† He is the great subject they contain, they are a revelation of him. The Scriptures of the Old Testament “testify of him;”‡ and concerning whom, those of the New give a more clear and full revelation. After the Patriarchal dispensation, from Moses to David, the Jews had the first rudiments of Christ; they were instructed to spell him out of sacrifices, ceremonies, and darker promises of a temporal nature. From David until the Babylonian captivity, they were more fully taught the knowledge of the Messiah, in the explications of the types and figures, by the Prophets. From the captivity to the coming of Christ in the flesh, they became more matured in the knowledge of him, and earnestly desired his advent.

Under the Jewish dispensation, and that of the Patriarchs, observes Dr. Watts, there were many persons in whom the beginning of eternal life

* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. † Coloss. iii. 16. ‡ John v. 39.

was produced; but not with that glory and evidence as under the Christian. Indeed Judaism was but a sort of infant Christianity, a veiled Gospel. The Christian religion is Judaism fulfilled, or the Gospel standing in open light. All that holiness and happiness which was found among the Jews and Patriarchs, is entirely owing to Christ and his Gospel; to the sacrifice, Spirit, and grace of Jesus, which were typified by the legal atonements and blood, sprinklings, and washings: and which wrought powerfully divine life in their souls, through all those types, but with feebler conviction, and in a fainter light.*

The Christian dispensation exceeds the Jewish in glory. The Old testament establishes the New, and the New illustrates the Old. All the writings of the Evangelists are a copious history of Christ—of his divine and human natures, his incarnation, birth, life, doctrine, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Book of the Acts carries on the account of his ascension and exaltation at the right hand of God, of his pouring down the Spirit, of his continuation in Heaven, as to his human nature, to the end of the world; and relates the labours and sufferings of the Apostles in the cause of Christ, and how his presence was with them, to assist and render their efforts successful. The Epistles are full of Christ, written to Churches founded by the ministry of the Apostles, and whose members had embraced the genuine Gospel, and

* See Dr. Watts's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 58.

lived conformable to wholesome discipline. And the book of the Revelation displays Christ's exalted character, his dominion over all things, his care of his Church, and the astonishing revolutions that should take place in the world, on the behalf of his people, till all his and their enemies should be utterly destroyed, and his faithful servants brought to the full enjoyment of the perfect and endless felicity of the heavenly state.

Christ, I say, is the great subject of the Scriptures; both the Old and New Testament inform us what he is. The light of reason, assisted by the works of creation and providence, gives us no discovery of him; but the Scriptures not only reveal him, but teach us concerning his personal and mediatorial glory. They shew us that he is the Son of God in our nature, the only Mediator between God and men. They bring us to be acquainted with his infinite perfections and condescension as God, and with his perfect obedience and exquisite sufferings as Man. They represent him in his mediatorial offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King; and assure us of the excellence and acceptableness of his obedience, both active and passive. They speak of the height of his exaltation in heaven, and of his being the awful Judge at the Last Day. They exhibit him as an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to *perfection* all that come unto God by him. In short, as if language failed, they speak of him as *all and in all*.* As *all*, in the whole of our salvation, for

* Collos. iii. 11.

he is “made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption:”* as *all*, in all our graces and gifts; which are bestowed “according to the measure of the gift of Christ:”† as *all*, in all our spiritual life, acts, privileges, and comforts:‡ as *all*, in all our assistance and ability, which are “through Christ strengthening us:”§ as *all*, in point of acceptance, for it is in this “Beloved,” that both we and our services are “accepted:”|| and he is *all*, in all our hope for eternal happiness, for “Christ *in* us,” is the foundation of our “*hope of glory.*”¶

Now, notwithstanding that Christ, by dying for our sins, made peace between God and us; yet, if this important fact had not been made known by his word, we could not have had recourse to him, but should have been in the same unhappy condition as the Heathen, who living “without Christ, and without God in the world,” are also without hope.** But, thank God, this is not our dreadful case; for Jesus, who by his death procured salvation, has also by his Gospel published it, and thus “brought life and immortality” more fully “to light.”†† Our Saviour, while on earth, revealed the grace and love of God to men, and made known his will concerning their salvation. By his doctrine, as well as by his death, he opened Heaven to the sons of men; and shewed them both what is necessary to their obtaining an interest in him, and a right through him to eternal life.

* 1 Cor. i. 30. † Eph. iv. 7. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. § Phil. iv. 13.
|| Eph. i. 6. ¶ Coloss. i. 27. ** Eph. ii. 12. †† 2 Tim. i. 10.

As it is the intention of an architect when he has laid a foundation, to proceed in raising the superstructure upon it; so as God has been graciously pleased to lay **CHRIST crucified**, as the only foundation upon which we are to build our salvation and happiness, we should not delay this necessary and important work. The soul of man (as Dr. Clarke very excellently observes,) is often represented in Scripture, under the figure of a building. This *house* God formed in the beginning for his own temple. In it he dwelt, and in it, a sacrifice worthy of his immaculate purity, and infinite Majesty, was constantly offered up. But alas! man being in honour, continued not—*sin* was introduced—the temple became defiled—the Lord abandoned it—satan entered in—and the sacred structure was laid in ruins. To re-build this house, and make it once more a habitation of God through the Spirit, the Almighty Saviour descended from Heaven, and made a tabernacle among men: thus shewing us, by dwelling in our nature, in holiness, purity, and truth, that we might again become a holy temple of the Lord, and be raised by his grace to that state of moral excellence and glory which we had in the beginning: himself being the pattern, after which he purposed to form the building. But though the human soul be in a state of ruin, and the form and comeliness of the building be passed away; yet not one of the original materials is lost:—to follow the metaphor, the stones and timbers are still in existence: but they are all displaced and disjointed; and none but the divine Architect can revive these

out of the rubbish, and restore the shape and beauty of the edifice. To effect this, the foundation must be again laid; the stones cleansed and re-placed; and the timbers re-jointed. Now, “other foundation can no man lay,” so as to have a solid, perfect, and durable building, but that which is laid already, viz. *CHRIST crucified*: and Him, not only as the *meritorious cause* of the building, and great *Operator* in it; but also as the *Pattern* according to which the house is to be formed. All that is of Christ, resembles him. When the ruined soul is built *up, on, through, and after* him, the excellence of the materials, the regular adjustment of the parts, the form, beauty, magnificence and utility of the whole, at once proclaim, the infinite skill, unlimited power, and eternal love of the great Architect.

It is not less necessary to build *on* the foundation than to *lay* it. Many grievously err on this point. They are ever laying the foundation, and never building on it: and strange to tell, this only is allowed by some to be preaching Christ! As if one should say, “He who is determined to build a proper and convenient house for himself to dwell in, can never effect his purpose but by laying the foundation every day as long as he lives.” Who does not see that this man can never have a house? He has no more than its foundation, and can never be its inhabitant.—As the foundation should be laid, and kept lying, once for all, and the building raised upon it; so Christ Jesus as the Foundation-stone, as the only name through which men can be saved,

should be laid once for all: and when it appears that this foundation is laid, from that moment, the minister of God, who understands his work, and attends to it, will proceed to raise the superstructure.

But let it not be supposed that the Lord Jesus has nothing to do with the building, but merely to be its support. He is still not only the foundation, without which the house must be immediately involved in its primitive ruin, but also the great Director of the whole work. As he came before *by blood*, so he comes now by *water*, and by the *Spirit*; by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. As it was only by his sacrifice that the atonement was made, so it is only by his direction and energy, that even the wisest master-builder can raise on this foundation a superstructure of gold, silver, and precious stones; for without *him* nothing good can be done. But the great mistake of many is, that preaching Christ, only as the Author of salvation, without shewing him to be the Accomplisher of it. What Christ has done *for* us, is a favourite subject with many; but what Christ is to do *in* us, is a topic well considered but by few.*

The Apostles preached the Gospel, and their labours were crowned with success. They addressed the understanding, as well as the will and affections of their hearers; and required the assent of the one, as well as the obedience of the other, to the

* See Dr. Clarke's Sermon on the Christian Prophet and his Work—for the above thoughts.

important doctrines they delivered. They constantly endeavoured to bring persons to the right foundation, and establish them upon it. Many, through believing, received Christ, and rested upon him for eternal salvation. Thus it is with all other genuine Christians: renouncing all dependence on themselves or others, they place all their trust on Jesus Christ, expecting to derive from him everlasting life. But this believing is not a bare credence, that there once lived in the world such a person as Jesus, who did and suffered all that is recorded by the Evangelists concerning him, but comprehends a conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit—the scriptural knowledge of his mediatorial character—and an entire devotedness of body and soul to him, to be completely and for ever saved.

A deep sense of our depravity and guilt, of our danger and misery by nature and practice, is antecedent to our receiving Christ, so as to build on him as the only foundation. Every man born into this world is naturally depraved, and, if the grace of God prevent not, as he grows up in years his sinful inclinations will strengthen into habit; he will be averse from good, prone to evil, and obnoxious to avenging justice. Of this a man must be made sensible, before he can have any desire to come to Christ. He who thinks himself *whole*, will not come to this heavenly *Physician* for *healing*.* He who is not convinced that he is *naked*, *blind*, and *poor*, but imagines that he is *rich*, and *encreased*

* Matt. ix. 12.

with goods, and has *need of nothing*, will not come to him for *white raiment* to cover his nakedness, for *eye salve* to cure his blindness, or for *refined gold* to enrich him.* But all they who have been convinced of their weakness, poverty, and guiltiness, who have seen all their former presumptuous hopes blasted, and have been alarmed with the apprehension of impending wrath, will be ready and anxious to escape to Jesus, when revealed to them, and rest upon him as the only rock of their salvation.

There is an inexpressible *evil* in sin. It is robbing God of his *glory*: “through breaking the law, we dishonour God.†” Sin is virtually a denial of his *wisdom*, as if he knew not how to make laws, proper for the government of his creatures. It is an impeachment of his *righteousness* and *equity*, as if he required a subjection and homage that are not his due. It is a reflection on his *goodness*, as if he denied men the privilege of some beneficial enjoyments. It is a contempt of his *power*, as if he was not able to support the sanctions of his laws, by the performance of his promises, and execution of his threatenings. It is a disparagement to his *authority*, as if he was not worthy to be regarded and obeyed. It is a contradiction to his *sovereignty*, by giving the preference to our own will above his. And it is a direct contrariety to his *holiness*, which is the beauty and glory of all his perfections. All this malignity there is in sin, and before a person can build on

* Rev. iii. 17. † Rom. ii. 23.

Christ for salvation and eternal life, he must be made so sensible of sin, as truly to grieve and mourn for having been in so many repeated instances guilty of it. I own, that the conviction of the evil of sin is not the same as to the measure of it, in all penitents; the degrees are various in different persons; but it is obvious, that a humbling sense of it, in some degree or other, is absolutely necessary to lead men to build on Christ.

Suitable views of the ability of Jesus to save those who put their trust in him, must accompany a penitential sorrow for sin. A man cannot believe in one of whom he knows nothing. The salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, is such a mystery of godliness, that reason in its highest improved state could never have contrived it. We know that there is a Supreme Being, who is to be worshipped and obeyed; that we have all sinned against him, and that an atonement must be made for sin, before it can be forgiven; but what man, by the best cultivation of his reason, could ever have imagined, that God manifested in the flesh must satisfy infinite justice, in order that infinite mercy may be displayed in the sinner's salvation.

This shews us the great necessity and advantage of divine revelation. Christ is revealed to the true believer, not only in the Gospel, but by the Spirit of truth. Though he has not seen him with the eye of sense, he believes the record God has given of his Son. The penitent sees himself polluted and guilty, under sentence of condemnation, and exposed to the terrors of vindictive justice: but he

perceives Jesus to be every way suitable to the pressing necessities of his soul. He discovers in him almighty power, perfect righteousness, infinite goodness, boundless compassion, inviolable truth, and never-failing faithfulness. He “beholds his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;”* one in whom it has “pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell.”† He looks to Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Saviour of God’s own appointing, and through whom alone eternal life is to be obtained. He believes him to be the rock of ages, and the only sure foundation of his hope, his confidence, and his joy.

A surrender of the soul to Christ, to be saved by him, will follow. When persons are convinced that they are in danger of everlasting perdition, and have been taught by the Holy Spirit that their only help is in Jesus, they will not only desire to be saved, but give themselves to him, to be justified by his merit, cleansed by his blood, strengthened by his grace, and kept by his power to the end of their probationary state. They desire to be saved according to the plan of mercy devised by infinite wisdom, not to prescribe to him, but submit entirely to his gracious constitution and government, that he may have all the glory. Being convinced that all foundations of their own contriving would disappoint their hope, they venture the present and everlasting concerns of their souls upon this rock,

* John i. 14. † Coloss. i. 19.

believing that Jesus is faithful to keep whatever is committed to his trust. He has assured us, that whosoever believeth in him, "shall not perish;" that he will "give to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand." And here believers repose their trust, and repose all their confidence.

To build upon Christ the foundation, is the *building up* of the soul in the knowledge, love, and image of God. And (we shall add in the words of Dr. Clarke,) "*continual* edification, implies a constant growth in grace—a daily increase of those graces which constitute the mind of Christ—a constant addition to the former stock, so that he who believes, and continues faithful, increases with all the increase of God. Thus, to his faith, is added virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance, brotherly-kindness, and charity; pure universal love to God and man. As every new stone that is laid in the building, adds something to it, and brings it nearer its perfection; so every sermon, every act of faith—of prayer—of mercy and kindness, becomes a mean in the hand of the Lord, of increasing the light, life, and love of the believing soul.

As every individual thus edified (or builded up) by the grace of Christ, becomes a temple of God, so the whole Church or assembly of the first-born, form a vast and grand building, in which Jesus lives and reigns. Each who was individually a temple of God, becoming a stone, or part of this general building. Therefore, fully to understand what

the Apostle says on this subject, "Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house," &c. we must form the idea of a number of souls built up in faith and love, in inward and outward holiness—united in the bands of christian fellowship, and walking in the consolations of the Holy Ghost.—These are the *lively stones*, instinct with the living virtue of the living God.—These are built up a spiritual house, each is considered a stone, in the sacred edifice, and a necessary and beauteous part of the building. Their *places* may be different—some *within*, some *without*; some in the *back-part* of the building, others in the *front*; some *corner stones*, uniting and strengthening the building; others *head-stones*, finishing and perfecting the work. All are arranged, and employed, not only according to their several degrees of grace, but also according to their various talents: nevertheless, the whole collectively form but *one* building, the genuine *catholic* or *universal Church*, whose creed is the BIBLE, and whose inhabitant is the MOST HIGH GOD."*

Having thus shewn that CHRIST *crucified* is the only and sure foundation God has laid in Zion, and upon which his Church as the superstructure is built and shall stand for ever, as an excellent and astonishing instance of wisdom, goodness, and

* *ibid.*

power;) we shall notice some important inferences naturally arising from, or closely connected with, the subject under discussion. As

1. *The supreme Godhead of Jesus Christ.*

A superstructure high as heaven, wide as the population of the globe, continued through all the successive periods of time and the ages of eternity, upon which millions of souls rest all their weight, and against which storms and tempests spend their fury, requires a proportionable foundation, deep, immovable, eternal, equal to bear the heaviest pressure, and that shall support and preserve the spacious fabric unshaken and secure. Such a foundation is Jesus Christ: hence we infer that he is God. He must be possessed of infinite wisdom, to know all the various and intricate cases of his people, and be competent to direct their steps through the mazes of human life. He must have infinite love, to exercise pity towards them under all their grievances, and equal patience to bear with their failings. He must have almighty power, to render him capable to support them under their burdens, protect and defend them against their numerous and combined enemies, and amply supply their returning wants. The very notion that Christ is the sure foundation of the salvation of the Church, and of all the blessings of which that salvation consists, implies his Supreme Deity. He could neither have purchased salvation for mankind, nor have applied it to believers, if he was not over all, God blessed for ever.

If we are to depend on him alone, (as the

Scripture directs us to do) for pardon, peace, holiness, and eternal life; we cannot view him ultimately in any other light, in any lower character, than that he is God by nature. It is shocking to be told by some in our day, that our adorable Saviour is a mere creature, or a Being, however excellent, yet inferior to God. If he is not God, in the proper sense of the word, how shall we commit ourselves, our most important concerns, for time and eternity, into his hands, with the same calm satisfaction that the Apostle did when he said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day?" Or how shall we be certain we do not exceed the proper limits in placing our trust in him, or that he will not disappoint our expectation of receiving good from him? What dependence can we place on his righteousness and merits, as really sufficient to reconcile us to God? How can we be assured he knows our wants, has ability to supply them, is able to guide us with unerring counsel through this world abounding with dangerous snares and formidable foes, by his arm to conduct us safely through the dark regions of death itself, and at last to give us a triumphant victory over all our spiritual enemies, and open to us an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory? If he is not God, our faith and trust in him are built on a weak and sandy foundation. If his Godhead be taken away, the foundation of our hope is sapped and undermined.

But, from his being the foundation of the

Church, it plainly follows, that he is God. His essential divinity authorises our belief of the all-sufficient, nay, infinite virtue of his mediation; and encourages our firmest dependence upon him, as the foundation of salvation. The nature and importance of his work, as Mediator, will give an unprejudiced mind to perceive, that unless he was God, he could not possibly accomplish it. Socinians deny his proper work of mediation, and then attempt to despoil him of the qualifications for it. They exalt human nature, to lower the dignity of Christ. They oppose their dark and fallible reason, to the luminous and necessary operation of faith.

2. *The astonishing condescension of the Son of God.* In architecture, the foundation is the lowest part of the building. So in that sacred structure the Church of God, no one ever stooped so low, or endured so much, as the meek and lowly Jesus. He was infinitely and completely happy in himself, and in his Father's love. And what privation would he have suffered, if he had left mankind to perish, as he did the apostate angels? Our everlasting ruin could not have diminished his essential glory, nor would our complete salvation increase his essential happiness. It was then nothing but pure love and pity, that moved him to suffer and die for us. What amazing condescension! How great was his humiliation! He who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, whom angels worship, clothed himself with our nature, submitted to poverty,

want, reproach, scorn, and, at last, to an ignominious death, to be laid in the grave, that he might raise us to glory and honour! Surely we should adore him for his goodness, and learn humility from his example.

Some persons, indeed, have made a fatal abuse of this condescension of the Son of God. They have turned the means of salvation into instruments of destruction. They look on the mediation of Christ as a cunningly devised fable, and will not believe the record God has given of his Son. O shameful infidelity! O amazing folly! How great is the guilt, and how just will be the condemnation of such unbelievers! How unhappy is their condition! They flatter themselves that they are right: but how miserably are they deceived! All their hope will fail when death comes: or if they should even then entertain a groundless and presumptuous confidence, death will draw aside the veil, and when they stand before the bar of God, confusion will cover them. Be not offended at Jesus, O man, lest he fall upon thee, and grind thee to powder. If thou art offended at the meanness of his birth, the poverty of his life, the strictness of his precepts, the ignomy of his death, the burden of his cross, the simplicity and plainness of his worship, and stumble and fall upon this foundation, thou shalt be broken: but, if he be offended with thee, because of thy impenitence, the hardness of thy heart, the obstinacy of thy unbelief, and in wrath come against thee, and fall upon thee, he will crush thy guilty soul to the place of endless torments. Come

to Jesus Christ, the only foundation, the rock of eternity, and thy hope shall never fade, but be gloriously realized in the heavenly world. For he is a foundation deep as thy misery, strong as the pillars of heaven, and durable as the throne of God.

How amazing is the folly of irreligious men! They spend their days with labour and toil for that which will soon mock their expectation, and leave them destitute. Are they careful for their bodies? These tabernacles of clay have their foundation in the dust, and will soon decay. Are they aspiring after fame and honour? They must lie down in the grave, and be forgotten—their flesh shall rot, and their names be no more remembered. Are they endeavouring to accumulate riches? They earn wages to put into a bag with holes. Are they solicitous to lay up treasure for their children? They know not who shall possess them. Are they with vast expence and fatigue attempting to build magnificent houses, or stately palaces? How many of these already lie buried in dust, have been swallowed up by earthquakes, or consumed by fire. And could they erect buildings that would continue as long as the earth upon which they stand; the foundations of the earth shall soon be broken up, and the whole visible world dissolved.

3. *The perfect security of the Church.* Sometimes the Church of Christ appears to be in great danger—as when many enemies rise up against her—when the zeal of her friends is become feeble, or they are discouraged—when some are denying, others undermining her foundations—when there

are open heresies existing among her members, which strike at the vitals of Christianity—when professors are generally lukewarm and indifferent—when the members of the Church are careless and unbecoming in their walk—when contempt is thrown on the ordinances of Christ—when there are schisms, sad alienation of affection from one another, divisions and tumult, among Christians—when the faithful are persecuted, and brought into deep distress:—such things as these, are not only plain evidences of declining piety, but by some are considered as awful presages of the destruction of the Church of Christ.

In such a state of things, the interests of Zion more sensibly affect the hearts of good men, than any secular concerns of their own. The true Disciples cannot but be heavy, they feel exquisite pain, and are in danger of being inundated with grief. But the Church is built upon Christ the sure foundation, and shall be permanent as the basis that supports this heavenly erection. God has always had a Church in the world, and notwithstanding the opposition of enemies, will have one to the end of time. Particular churches, indeed, may be, and have been demolished, as the once famous Christian churches in Asia, and several in Africa. But the catholic or universal Church shall continue. “God is in the midst of her,”* “and the highest himself shall establish her.”† Of old, God said to his Church, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be

* Psal. xlv. 5. † Psal. lxxxviii. 5.

not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."* "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn."†

The perfections of Jesus Christ, as God, and his offices, as Mediator, secure the establishment of the Church. The love he has for his followers, and the relation in which he stands to them, engage the exercise of his power in the promotion of their welfare. "In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest."‡ "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth."§ God "has put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the Church,"|| for her service, security, and continuance. All the power of the enemies of the Church, infernal spirits and wicked men, is under his control, and subject to his authority. He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him."¶ He is on the right hand of God, sits enthroned there, until all his enemies shall be made his footstool.** It is scarcely possible, that the Christian Church should undergo greater opposition than it has already done; and we see it continues to exist, remaining to this day a standing monument of the power, care, faithfulness, and mercy of Christ. The Bush has been

*Isai. xli. 10. †Isai. liv. 17. ‡Isai. xxv. 10. §Matt. xxviii. 18.

||Eph. i. 22. ¶1 Pet. iii. 22. **Psal. cx. 1.

all on a flame, but was not consumed ; because of the good will of Him who dwells therein. The flock of Christ, though little, and living among wolves, has not yet been destroyed, nor ever shall ; for, “lo,” he says, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”*

4. *The consolation of genuine Christians.*

You have been convinced of the great evil of sin, of the depravity of your nature, and of the utter impossibility of making satisfaction to divine justice for your sins. An affecting, humbling sense of sin, and of your lost and perishing condition by reason of it, entered your soul, and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, prepared you for a suitable reception of Christ. Men may talk of Jesus, but only those esteem him as they ought, who have tasted the bitterness of sin. The voice of free grace sounds delightful, only in the ears of awakened sinners. To such, the provision of Gospel, as a sure ground of justification and salvation, is most welcome. The violence of a storm makes the harbour desirable. When we begin to feel how deep the wounds are, which sin has given us, we then earnestly apply to the heavenly Physician for healing.

You have been brought to see the insufficiency of your own righteousness for justification and salvation, and have cheerfully and entirely renounced and disclaimed it for such purposes. Dagon and the Ark of God could not stand together ; nor can

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

self, in its boasted pretensions, consist with the supreme regard we owe to Christ, and the grace as exercised in and through him. Our own righteousness, and that of Christ, cannot stand together, as the meritorious cause of our justification and salvation. The Jews sought a justifying righteousness by the works of the law; being ignorant of God's righteousness, they went about to establish their own, and so submitted not to the righteousness of Christ: which conduct was highly criminal, and in the end proved fatal to them. Now, you have been brought to disclaim all confidence in your own righteousness, and, with St. Paul, to count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ.

You have received Christ, according to the proposal in the Gospel. You have heartily consented to the gracious terms of salvation; have fixed the eye of your faith distinctly and steadily on Christ; and while you gave the firmest credit to the great things the Gospel reveals, and the way of salvation, you were also willing to be saved by him in his own way; and accordingly threw open the doors, and invited him to the throne of your hearts. You received him in the full extent of his mediatorial character, and in the same latitude in which the Gospel exhibits him: not only as your righteousness to pardon, but as your sanctification to purify you; not only as your Priest to atone for you, but as your King to govern and form you into a state of dutiful subjection to himself. And you are determined, through grace,

to abide devoted to him. Your dependence upon him is fixed, and while you see your dearest interests in his hands, this is your point of rest; and you are saying, if we perish, we will perish here. There is nothing you more sincerely wish than a conformity to him. You desire to be more like him in temper and conduct, to follow his example, to be holy as he is holy, to do cheerfully what God requires of you, and suffer patiently what he lays upon you, for the sake and honour of Christ. It is by the holiness of your hearts and lives, that you judge of your relation to him, and his complacency in you.

Being thus built by faith on Christ, while you abide on this foundation, you are safe in every condition of life. Are you violently assaulted by the temptations of the powers of darkness? Consider, “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* Christ, in Heaven, is interceding for you, as he did for Peter, when on earth, that “your faith fail not.† His “grace is sufficient for you;”‡ and the “God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly,”§ and place you out of his reach for ever.—Are you exercised with afflictions? Consider, that Christ himself was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”|| “In all his people’s affliction he is afflicted.”¶ Even now he is in Heaven, the Apostle says of him, “We have not an High Priest which cannot

*1 John iv. 4. †Luke xxii. 32. ‡2 Cor. xii. 9. §Rom. xvi. 20.

||Isai. liii. 3. ¶Isai. lxiii. 9.

be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”* He is sensible of what his followers suffer, and sympathizes with them in all their distresses. He has wise and beneficial purposes to accomplish, by all that he permits to befall them; and though at present they cannot know the reason of his dispensations, yet they may rest assured that they shall know afterwards, and see, with wonder and the highest satisfaction, how Providence was all the time fulfilling the promise that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God.”† Are you labouring under fears of apostasy, and perishing at last, by reason of the prevalence of error and delusion, or violent persecution? Consider that Jesus Christ, who has been the “author of your faith,” will be the “finisher” of it too.‡ While you give the Lord your whole hearts, you may “be confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”§ Christ “will deliver you from every evil work, and will preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom.”|| As to seductive error, it is not possible for false Prophets finally to deceive the elect.¶ It is promised to believers in Christ, that by the unction they have received from the Holy One, they shall know all things necessary to their abiding in him.** As to persecution, it shall not separate them from the love of Christ—neither “tribulation, nor distress,

* Heb. iv. 15. † Rom. viii. 28. ‡ Heb. xii. 2. § Phil. i. 6.
 ¶ 2 Tim. iv. 18. ¶ Matt. xxiv. 24. ** 1 John ii. 20, 27.

nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword: nay, in all these things," if permitted to come upon them, they shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved them."* Are you afraid of death? You need not be under any alarming apprehensions, for Christ has removed its sting from you. It is indeed a gloomy valley that you are to pass through when dying, but you need fear no evil, for Christ will be with you.—He has passed through this dark vale, and now stands on the other side to open the gates of the heavenly Paradise, and bid you welcome to all the blessedness and glory of Heaven. And though you lay down your mortal bodies in the cold grave, Christ will assuredly raise and glorify them at his coming, when you shall appear with him in glory.

5. *The folly and peril of attempting to lay other foundations, and build upon them.* All other foundations of salvation beside Christ, are weak and sandy, and will fail, and confound those who build their hope of safety and happiness upon them. Many fatal mistakes in religion originate in the pride of human reason. Some persons imagine that they can fathom the deeps of the Christian religion with the short line of their own fallible reason, and perform its comprehensive duties by their natural powers, independent of the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and so they lean to their own understandings, and trust in their own hearts, for the acquisition of what is to be known,

* Rom. viii. 35—37.

and the performance of what is to be done, in order to their salvation. The Holy Scriptures uniformly shew the weakness and insufficiency of such a principle and confidence. For instance: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."† By nature we are "dead in trespasses and sins,"‡ full of "enmity against God"§ and his laws. "How to perform that which is good,"|| we know not; "without Christ we can do nothing."¶ These scripture declarations are convincing evidences, that our own unassisted reason and perverse will, without the illumination and energy of the Holy Spirit, are not to be depended upon, in securing the important object of our salvation.

The doctrines of the Gospel cannot be known correctly, so as to produce beneficial effects, without the teaching of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation: nor the duties of it performed, without his concurring assistance. The saving knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, is a divine gift. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven."** "God hath re-

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Eph. ii. 1. § Rom. viii. 7.

|| Rom. vii. 18. ¶ John xv. 5. ** Matt. xiii. 11.

vealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”* And obedience is ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit. “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.”†—“It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”‡ When men depend solely upon their own reason, in their enquiries concerning the truths of divine revelation, and do not rely on the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to “guide into all truth,”§ they are left to embrace the most dangerous errors. And when, in the neglect of Christ, they trust to their own power and choice, it is no wonder that God leaves them to the conduct of their own foolish hearts, which soon turn them aside into the crooked paths of vanity and sin.

If any should ask, To what purpose has God given us a revelation of doctrines of faith, and precepts for duty, if we are not able of ourselves to comprehend the former, and to perform the latter, accurately and fully? I answer, He has done so to awaken us to a sense of our own spiritual darkness and deadness, to convince us of our ignorance and impotence, that we may be humbled

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. † Ezek. xxxvi. 27. ‡ Phil. ii. 13.

§ John xvi. 13.

and led to Christ for light, life, and strength, and be induced to ascribe to him the glory of the saving knowledge of the truths of the gospel, to which we attain, and of all the good we do. As the Apostle did, “By the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.”*

There are persons in the Christian world who own the name of Christ, and pretend to preach the Gospel, but consider it only as a re-publication of the law and religion of nature, which every man, by the proper exercise of his rational faculties, might have discovered. They say, that God sent his Son into the world to be a prophet and a preacher of righteousness; to teach men a purer morality than they at that time practised; and to reform mankind by his doctrine and example, as some of the Jewish Prophets had done before him. But they deny the most essential part of his character and work—that he died a sacrifice, and made atonement for sin. They lay no emphasis on his sufferings and death, and say, that these happened by accident, from the malice of the Jews, but were not necessary to our reconciliation with God, nor were intended by himself in coming into the world. They deny his Godhead, and assert that he is no more than a creature. They refuse the merits of his death, and will not acknowledge the neces-

sity of a satisfaction. They aver that he has not obtained by his sufferings, reconciliation, pardon, redemption, and sanctification, for all who believe in him and obey his commands. Thus they disown the foundation of the sacred building the Church, and renounce Christ as the ground of their hope and happiness; and exhort their hearers to expect eternal life, in the practice of such a morality, as the light of reason teaches.

To trust in the mercy of God, without reference to Christ, is the avowed profession of such persons. The infinite mercy and compassion of God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, they imagine to be a foundation sufficient on which to build their hope of heaven. We are sinners, say they, and in our past conduct have been guilty of many transgressions of the divine law: but God in his word has declared himself to be infinite in mercy, and therefore he will not condemn us to everlasting punishment; upon his infinite mercy we build our hope of salvation, and are not afraid of being disappointed. But these persons are greatly deceived, and will perceive their destructive error, when they find, that “he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.”* Such as rely upon the absolute mercy of God for the felicity of the heavenly world, in their presumptuous thoughts and expectations act in direct opposition to the clear and express declarations which God has made in the Scriptures.

* Isai. xxvii. 11.

For instance: "He will by no means clear the guilty."* "The wicked shall be turned into hell."† "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."§ These are declarations to which such persons do not sufficiently attend.

They have but a very imperfect knowledge of God; entertaining unworthy notions of him, who is the fountain of perfection, and the wise and righteous governor of the world. Mercy is not the only perfection of the Divine Nature, it is but one of many, from which, if it could be separated, it would not be a perfection. Mercy without wisdom to guide, and holiness and justice to limit its operation, would be a sort of blind undistinguishing affection. Though God is indeed infinitely merciful, yet every person is not a proper object of mercy; and it belongs to his wisdom and holiness to determine who are, and who are not, fit objects of it. And are those objects of mercy, who will not receive it through Christ, and upon the terms on which it is offered?

Justice and holiness are perfections of the Divine Nature, as well as mercy. His holiness gives him a perfect, irreconcilable hatred to all sin. His justice, unless satisfied, will be awfully dis-

* Exod. xxxiv. 7. † Psal. ix. 17. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

played in the destruction of sinners. He has threatened guilty sinners with eternal death, as the wages of sin, and we may depend on his veracity. He will execute his threatenings on the finally impenitent, and those who reject salvation by Jesus Christ. They, therefore, who build their hope of eternal life on the absolute mercy of God, in the neglect of Christ, build on a sinking foundation. God will never extend his pardoning mercy to any, but through Christ, and for his sake. As he sent him to die for sinners, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and set him forth as a propitiation; so he has determined that none shall have the benefit of the atonement he made, but such only as truly repent and believe. Therefore our Saviour told the Jews, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."† "He that believeth not on the Son of God, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."‡ Certainly if men would but listen to the dictates of reason, they would never imagine that God, who is infinite in wisdom, should disgrace his own perfections, in shewing mercy to such, who have nothing in them but what is odious in his sight, and contrary to the infinite purity of his nature.

Some persons betray their ignorance, in building on the foundation of their own personal, partial, moral righteousness, obedience or good works, and expect justification before God, and eternal life,

* Luke xiii. 3.

† John viii. 24.

‡ John iii. 36.

upon this account. Such are ignorant of the moral law, its spirituality and extent; of themselves, the depravity of their nature, and sinfulness of their actions. They are influenced by the pride of reason, which disdains to be obliged to the righteousness of another for their justification. But their own righteousness is a sandy and a most deceitful foundation; for, no righteousness is available to these purposes, but what is absolutely perfect, and that of no man is so, or has been since the first introduction of sin into the world. "There is none righteous, no, not one."* It is expressly asserted in the Scriptures, that we cannot be justified and saved by any good works of our own. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."† "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."‡ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."§ "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"|| "And enter not into judgement with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."¶ From these texts it is plain, that our

* Rom. iii. x. † Rom. iii. 28. ‡ Gal. ii. 16. § Tit. iii. 5.

|| Psal. cxxx. 3. ¶ Psal. cxliii. 2.

own righteousness, obedience, or good works, can form no sufficient foundation on which to build our hope of eternal life. Our own righteousness is neither in whole, nor in part, the foundation of the hope of salvation. Those who trust in themselves, reverse the manifest design of the Bible. God has testified that Jesus is the only Saviour, that he is for salvation to the ends of the earth, and that eternal life is in him.

As many of the fatal mistakes of the Socinians originate in their ignorance, or erroneous views of the sufferings and death of Christ, as a satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of mankind; we shall conclude with shewing, that the necessity of Christ's satisfaction will be evident from the solution of this question:—Whether vindictive or avenging justice be a necessary and essential attribute of the Divine Nature; or if it be only arbitrary, and depending on his will and pleasure. If the first be proved, and made evident, then, (as very able writers have remarked,) on the supposition of sin, either there must be a satisfaction made to offended justice, or God must deny his own nature. For clearing this question, we shall observe, the justice of God is differently understood, as,—the universal rectitude and purity of his nature—his veracity and faithfulness in fulfilling his promises—and his eternal and immoveable purpose of rendering to every rational creature according to his works; in which sense we understand it, as distinguished from his other attributes. It is to no purpose for Socinians to object, that there is no such attribute as vindicative

justice mentioned in the Scriptures. For though the expression be not there in so many letters, yet the same thing signified by it is frequently found under the names of “severity,”* “judgement,”† “righteous judgement,”‡ “recompensing tribulation,” and “taking vengeance.”§

Necessity, is either physical, abstract from all counsel and rational deliberation, which exerts itself necessarily, and always to the utmost extent of its power. Or necessity is by co-action, when though the agent be capable of counsel and deliberation, yet is insuperably obliged to perform the act, by the constraint of a superior power; in both which senses it is utterly inconsistent with the freedom of the will, and cannot in any case be ascribed to God. There is a rational necessity, which is founded in the natural constitution of a rational being, and exists there as a property or attribute antecedently to any act of the will; yet, is always exerted in a deliberate and rational manner, according to the counsel of the will, and is consistent with liberty. In which sense we understand necessity, when we say, that God necessarily punishes sin, or that punitive or vindicative justice is a necessary and essential perfection of God; by which there is an inseparable connection stated to exist between sin and punishment, antecedently to his declaration concerning it.

* Rom. xi. 22. † Rom. i. 32. ‡ Rom. ii. 5. Acts xvii. 31.
§ 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

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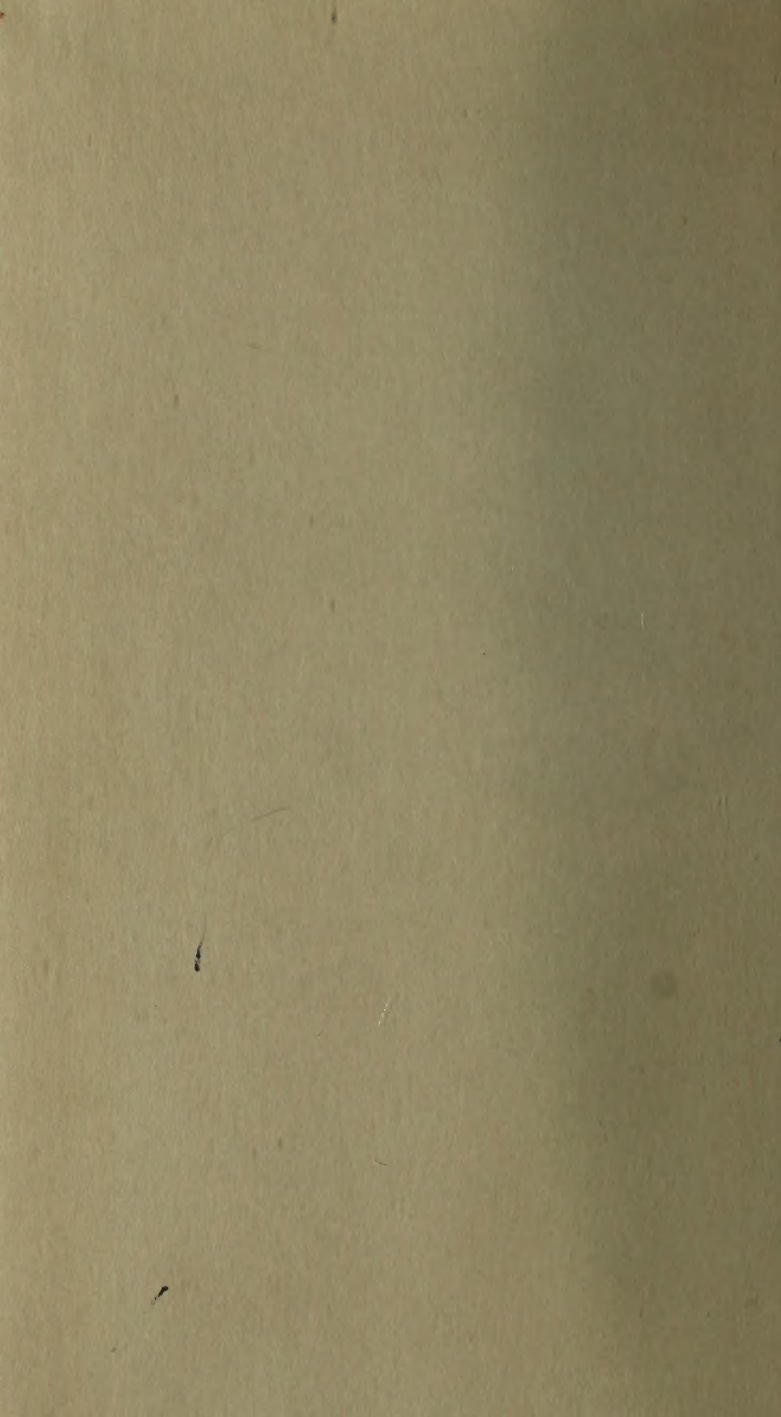
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